

*** Resending note of 01/21/87 11:55
To: NSGSG --CPU/ Colin L. Powell
FROM: William A. Cockell

NSWAP

--CFUA

Colin L. Powell

SUBJ: Iran-Iraq

Frank opened the discussion by reviewing the shopping list of possible US actions which Dick Murphy had brought over last evening. He said Dennis Ross would be coordinating with Rich Matlage so Frank could brief the President today. Cap felt it clearly was time to drop any pretense of even-handedness. We should no longer talk about ending the war "with no winners or losers." Iran is the aggressor in this case; and we should not only be supportive of Iraq, but should be seen to be supportive. This is an opportunity to recoup some of our standing in the region and regain credibility with the Arab states. With regard to accelerating arrival of the CVBG in the IC, Cap pointed out that if we are going to do it, we should take action now, since it will take a while for the battle group to transit. Defense would not want to put the carrier into the Persian Gulf, but having it on station in the Northern Arabian Sea made sense.

This led to a

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discussion of the FMS debt restructuring issue. The problem is basically a political one, Frank observed. If we provide relief for Egypt and others, the domestic program constituencies will be up in arms, and the heat from the hill will be intense. Cap commented that there are sound national security reasons from trying to provide Egypt some debt relief. Egypt is critical to the Mideast peace process; and in a contingency, we could well require Egyptian cooperation in the matter of bases, or other support. Cap said he intended to raise the FMS debt issue with the President, and urge him to direct Baker to be more forthcoming. Even if domestic pressures preclude our doing any more, it would be useful for the Administration to be seen (by the Egyptians) as at least attempting to provide greater relief. (Frank asked me to obtain talking points for the President to use with Cap. I passed the requirement to Steve Farrar who has provided them to Bob Pearson.) Discussion then returned to the issue of Murphy's shopping list. Frank continued to go through the items, and Cap was generally supportive and reiterated his view that we should not only take action to assist Iraq but ensure that the assistance is visible.

The Iraqi problem is not lack of weapons, but one of leadership and morale. We need to stiffen them up some way. Frank observed that if we are looking for a symbolic gesture, the sending of a team to discuss their needs with the Iraqis might be a good approach. Cap agreed, and the discussion ended on that note.

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Discussion then returned to the issue of Murphy's shopping list. Frank continued to go through the items, and Cap was generally supportive and reiterated his view that we should not only take action to assist Iraq but ensure that the assistance is visible. "Even if they don't need (U.S.) arms, we should make the offer," he felt, to impress on the Iraqis our bona fides and show the other Arabs as well that we want to be supportive. Others were not sure that an arms sale offer would be appropriate, or that it would play well politically here. There would be perception problems. Some would suggest it was a ploy by the President to deflect criticism of the Iran arms deal. An inconclusive discussion ensued about the legality of providing arms to the Iraqis through third parties, etc. No one was sure how the law might constrain our authorizing G-2 countries to transfer US equipment to Iraq, e.g. Cap agreed the arms would be essentially a symbolic gesture. The Iraqis' problem is not lack of weapons, but one of leadership and morale. We need to stiffen them up some way. Frank observed that if we are looking for a symbolic gesture, the sending of a team to discuss their needs with the Iraqis might be a good approach. Cap agreed, and the discussion ended on that note.

WHITE HOUSE E-MAIL